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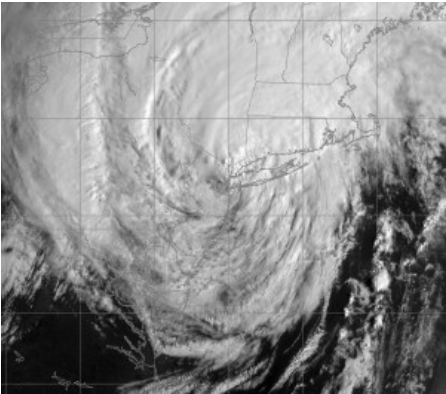
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Written on AUGUST 28, 2011 AT 1:43 PM by PDILLARD

Transforming a Navy Hospital to be Ready for Hurricane Irene

Filed under UNCATEGORIZED

(ONE COMMENT)



By Capt. Dan Zinder, Commanding Officer,
Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune

To weather the storm of Hurricane Irene, Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune transformed our facility from a medium-sized community hospital into a hospital, hotel, kid park, and kennel. We knew staff would not be able to concentrate on work if they were worried about their families so we invited them to bring family members along. And of course

for many, pets are an equal member of the family so if they could not find boarding, pets were welcomed too. We also invited all 38+ week pregnant women in our care to join us as boarders, along with their families.

It may sound a little crazy on the surface, but it has worked out great! Everyone has kept a positive attitude and so many were appreciative of the opportunity to bring their families and pets. Spontaneous acts of kindness and camaraderie were the norm. We had pot lucks in many of the work areas, a movie room for kids popped up, and we had games galore for kids of all ages – Twister in one room, Cranium in another, to name a few. We even had some good old fashioned Navy card games in a couple back rooms, just like on a ship returning from deployment. Patients were well cared for, staff and families bonded through the experience, and we brought six new Navy/Marine Corps babies into the world Friday night.

The first night we had 305 staff members, including many for rotating shifts, 35 patients, 85 family members, 20+ late pregnant women and their families, and 22 pets in cages. The pets included dogs, cats, guinea pigs, a rabbit, and one ferret. We also had a veterinarian and two vet techs in the pet area for support.

Luckily Irene weakened as she approached the coast so we only had 50-60 knot sustained winds and heavy rain, instead of the 100+ knot winds predicted. Our outstanding facilities maintenance crew has worked their tails off to keep us going and so far we have only sustained minor damage and a few drips through the ceiling. We have been on generator power since 2300 Friday night but have still been able to provide several emergency surgeries, support four intensive care unit patients, and provide a lot of obstetrics care through the night.

Our work during the storm is about caring for our patients, families, and staff. It is a shining

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example of the support network we have in the military and our ability to come together in adversity to simultaneously accomplish our mission, take care of each other and most importantly, have a good time doing it. We still have several hours to go and then we can start the recovery phase of operations. There will be much to do, but in the mean time we will continue as we have through day one.

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Joykatleen

Totally awesome and very well done, NHCL! Thanks for being there for our Navy families, and especially their pets. Sounds like you thought of everything.

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